No. 29

The REDEMPTION of Marie Gordon

THE TRAGIC STORY OF
WRONGED WOMANHOOD

Price 10¢

"'I am going to leave you to-morrow,' I said. Her face paled. "'Why?' she asked as she laid a hand upon my head. 'Are you tired of staying here?'"

R. of M. G., No. 29.

Copyright 1926 by
THE NIELEN PUBLISHING CO.
Cincinnati, Ohio.

BOB HARDING was relating to Betty's father, John Procter, what had transpired since the young couple had been married and mysteriously disappeared. He had just told of his arrest and imprisonment.

"For several months," he continued, "I received letters from Betty. Then the letters ceased to arrive. I was wild with disappointment and worry.

"There was trouble afoot at the penitentiary. A wholesale delivery was being planned, and I escaped with the others. I——"

"That was a mistake, my boy," the old man broke in vehemently. "You should have served out your sentence. If you are caught now, you'll be sent up for an additional term."

"No danger of that," the young man smiled confidentially.

"But why not?" the other demanded.

Bob Harding reached into his pocket and drew forth some newspaper clippings and also a letter.

"Please read these, sir," he said, handing them to Procter.

The latter put on his glasses, then leaned back and perused the printed articles. At first he looked frankly incredulous, and every now and then his eyes wandered to the young man's face.

But the climax was reached when he read the letter which was written by Charles Lennox, secretary to the Governor of Michigan.

It spoke in the most glowing terms about Bob Harding. It also stated that a good position was awaiting the latter if he cared to take it.

"Why—why, this is almost unbelievable!" John Procter exclaimed as he folded the letter. "You are a hero, my boy—a hero. I am proud to call you my son.

Come and embrace me."

It was indeed a pathetic scene which took place now.

The old man's heart was torn alternately with grief and joy. He had found a son, but lost a daughter. After they had both become calm once more, they discussed ways and means to locate Betty.

While thus engaged, the door opened and Alice strode in. She had just returned from her shopping tour.

"Oh, pardon me," she murmured when she saw that her father had a visitor. She attempted to close the door again, but her father motioned for her to stay.

"I have a surprise for you, Alice," he cried.

"A surprise for me?" she laughed, shrugging her shoulder. "Indeed."

"This young man here," indicating Bob Harding who had risen, "is Betty's husband."

Alice had not looked closely at the visitor, but when she did, it was not necessary for her father to introduce him. Had she not brought this poor automobile mechanic and Betty together with a certain purpose in mind?

And had she not encouraged her younger sister to marry him so that a father's wrath might fall upon her?

Her face blanched as she stared at the handsome youn man who came toward her, his hand extended.

"How are you, Mrs. Gordon?" he greeted her with a brotherly grin.

"Bob came here looking for his wife," John Procter interposed. "They became separated and he hoped to find her here."

This bit of information caused Alice to tremble. At that moment she wished this young brother-in-law of hers at the bottom of the sea. What evil fate brought him to Oak Manor at this time?

"Oh, I am so sorry that you must be disappointed," Alice said with a forced laugh as she barely touched Harding's fingertips. "Betty is not here and we have not the least idea what became of her. We believed her to be with you."

"Yes, so I understand," Bob answered slowly. "But such is not the case. If you can spare the time to listen to me for a few minutes, I will——"

"But I haven't," she interrupted, and with that she quitted the room.

John Procter could not assign a reason for his daughter's tactless behavior. She was merely running true to form. She had always been impatient and inconsiderate.

What mattered another's unhappiness to her? What cared she about her younger sister?

But in this instance he was wrong. Betty's whereabouts worried Alice a great deal more than either of the two men suspected.

For if Betty turned up alive, the Procter fortune would never become Alice's sole possession. The way she flew up to her boudoir and inquired for Nora Evans betrayed that she was in a panic.

"I must apologize for my oldest daughter," John Procter was saying to Bob Harding as they both seated themselves again. "She is so hard to understand."

"It is easy for me to forgive Alice," the younger man replied. "What happiness I knew came to me through her."

"Through her?" The other looked surprised.

"Yes. It was Alice who first introduced me to Betty. And I have been grateful to her ever since."

Old John Procter's mind did a quick backward turn. The statement made by Bob was rather at variance with what Alice told him at the time.

She had led him to believe that Betty deliberately flirted with the young automobile mechanic; that she had met him secretly, and had an affair with him which necessitated a speedy marriage.

For a while he studied Harding's features.

Again he was impressed with his honest, frank eyes and strong chin. His forehead was high, denoting a well developed brain and great intelligence.

"So my daughter Alice introduced you to Betty," he said, still somewhat in thought. "Would you mind telling a little more about it, my boy?"

The latter, without the least hesitation, told a story that was a revelation to Mr. Procter.

He told how Alice had called up the garage in which he worked, and insisted that he come and start her car, stalled in one of Chicago's distant suburbs.

He spoke feelingly about his first meeting with Betty, how he fell in love with her, and how they met repeatedly in Jackson Park.

"I knew I was not good enough for Betty," he confessed frankly as he went on, "but I loved her enough to even risk your displeasure and refusal. I intended calling on you, asking your permission to marry her, but Alice persuaded me not to do it.

"Perhaps she was right when she told me that you would never give your consent. Rich and prominent men like you don't give their daughters to poor automobile mechanics like me. I know that much myself.

"But I have always regretted her interference. It was she who first suggested that I marry Betty secretly and without your knowledge. But," he ended with a quick blush, "I must not attempt to place the fault on Alice's shoulders. After all, I was the man, and I acted like a scoundrel when I——"

The old gentleman stopped him with a gesture.

"We don't want to discuss that now, Bob," he said his voice a little unsteady. "What has been done can not be undone. Betty became your wife, and in spite of what happened, I am not sorry to call you my son."

Way down in his heart a wound began to bleed anew. Again he had received proof of Alice's duplicity and deceit.

It was not hard for him to guess why she had been so anxious to cause an estrangement between Betty and himself. The chief motive had been cruel selfishness.

"I would give half of my fortune to have Betty back," he spoke again, and rather huskily.

"And I would give twenty years of my life," the young husband cried. "Dear Mr. Procter, I want you to believe me when I say that I never gave Betty's wealth one single thought when I fell in love with her. I would have married her if she had been a pauper in rags."

Bob Harding's outburst did not leave his father-in-law unmoved. Every word he uttered carried conviction.

"I do believe you, my boy," he responded. "And now we'll combine forces and begin searching for Betty. For the present I want you to make this place your home. There is plenty of room here, and——"

"But Mr. Gordon may——" Bob broke in.

"Philip Gordon is one of the finest men alive today," Mr. Procter exclaimed. "He will be one of your most loyal supporters after I tell him all about you. He will be as glad to have you here as I am. Now consider that settled. I'll give orders to have a room prepared for you."

The young man's grateful emotions were mirrored in the expression of his handsome face. When he accepted the old gentleman's proposition, he had difficulty controlling his tears.

"I suppose you want to freshen up a bit," Mr Procter smiled.

"Yes, I would like to sir," said Bob. "I feel some what worn and dusty. If you will tell me where I can find the bathroom, I'll——"

"One of the servants will take care of you," the other interrupted as he struck the bell on the table.

A moment later Harding was taken in charge by the servant who came to answer the summons. John Procter gazed after him thoughtfully as he quitted the room.

Chapter 93

IN MIAMI.

MIAMI, FLORIDA is considered an ideal place for rich people to spend the cold winter months. There are those who are under the mistaken impression that this exclusive southern resort must be deserted during the summer. As a matter of fact the number of guests rarely decrease the whole year around.

The even temperature and the healthy climate holds those who come in search of physical strength and mental diversion.

Men, women and children from every state in America flock to Miami for the same purpose.

By some it is regarded as the playground for the rich, which is true to some extent. It is also an ideal spot for lovers.

At this particular season, when the summer was on the wane in the northern section of the country, great throngs could be seen on the sunny beaches, on the palm-studded promenades and on the wide verandas of the various big hotels.

There was the tall, thin, sharp-featured man from Boston with his flapper wife from New York. There was the friendly Westerner and the characteristic colonel from Kentucky. And so on and on. Every state of the union was represented.

Strolling along a certain secluded part of the beach one encountered a group which attracted quite a bit of attention.

It consisted of a slender and very beautiful woman

who always led a rather pale boy by one hand, while at her other clung a sweet-faced girl of tender years.

The woman's features were those, which, once seen, leave permanent memories. They were expressive of great suffering endured, and of an indomitable spirit.

Her eyes were large and brilliant. They were grave and gave a hint that their owner had gone through terrible things.

But the most impressive thing was her utter devotion to the two children. Her every gesture, word and smile radiated with love. Her appearance in general was not that of an ordinary governess.

Indeed, her obvious refinement, highly cultivated manner and speech placed her far above such a station.

At times she could be seen strolling up and down the beach attended by a maid. Those who happened to pass them remarked about her low, musical voice.

A number of gay bachelors, young and old—and some men that were not bachelors, attempted to carry on a flirtation with the woman.

They were rebuffed with a haughty stare or a cold smile.

It was whispered about that one daring young man had returned to the hotel with red finger marks on his cheek, the result of being slapped in no gentle manner by this same woman.

She had not been at Miami over two weeks when her strange charm and demureness became the popular topic of conversation. She held herself aloof, accepting no invitations to social functions.

At the Royal Palm Hotel she was registered as: "Marie Desmond, two pupils and maid."

It was a most puzzling matter. The hotel clerk was besieged by a horde of curious guests who insisted upon knowing all about this Marie Desmond.

But all the satisfaction he gave them was the information that she came from Chicago, and that she was well supplied with ready cash.

People followed her day after day, hoping to catch some word which might give them a clue as to her family connections. But Miss Desmond never raised her voice when talking to the children or to Annie.

The more attention she attracted, the more retiring she became.

She cared absolutely nothing for all these inquisitive strangers whose only purpose in life seemed the seeking of amusements and pleasures. They lived in the present, never giving a thought to the future.

At times she was utterly disgusted when guests of opposite sexes carried on a flirtation under her very nose. There were stolen glances and clandestine meetings. For instance, she had observed an overdressed New York woman, somewhat past her youth, openly encourage the advances of one of the official life savers at the beach.

All of this sickened her. And yet, she thought with a sigh:

"These people have come here in search of happiness. Some of them must steal it, perhaps. But what is that to me?"

Marie had come for the same purpose. She had found happiness in the steady improvement of her boy. Harry's annoying cough was entirely gone. He seemed to be regaining his health.

Phyllis was developing into a beautiful young girl. What more could she wish for?

But there were moments when her soul rebelled against fate. Must she forever remain a stranger to her own children?

Must she go through life unloved while another

woman owned Phil?

At first it had been easy enough to play the role of governess in his household. That was before Phil discovered that she was innocent of any wrongdoing.

But she had heard him accusing himself. She had seen his remorse, and read the intense longing in his eyes.

He longed for her—his first wife, and she could not go to him because another woman stood between them.

The only consolation she could get out of the entire horrible situation was, that she was permitted to see him occasionally at close range, hear his mellow voice and watch his fading smile.

Marie had never ceased loving him.

And now, that an insurmountable barrier stood between them, her very heart craved for this man whose passionate kisses and caresses had awakened her soul and made a woman out of her.

Twice every week she wrote to Phil, making a full report of the children's progress. And what a torture that was!

With a bleeding heart she had to confine herself to the bare facts regarding Harry and Phyllis which, as Miss Desmond, governess, were all she could use in her letters.

Her maternal instinct tempted her to express the joy she felt at the boy's steady improvement—but she did not dare.

Something of a similar nature appeared in Phil's letters in answer to hers. Here and there, between the lines, Marie could read things that made her heart beat faster.

These things showed her that he had to restrain himself in order to keep to strictly matter-of-fact corres

pondence.

He expressed great longing to see the children and all the more when his searches and investigations to find his first wife remained fruitless.

"Your letter, stating that Harry's stay at Miami is restoring him to health is a ray of sunshine into my darkened life," he wrote one day. "I will have no one to thank but you, my dear Miss Desmond."

Letters such as this one brought tears to her eyes, and she kissed the places where his thoughts were of her. They were balm for her bleeding heart.

The loneliness and sorrow Phil expressed occasionally pained her deeply. Yes, he longed for her. She knew it—she felt it. But her longing for him was far more intense.

Once she cast all reserve to the winds. In a moment of desperation she wrote:

"Phil, I can't stand it any longer. I am sorry I practised this deception on you and left you under the belief that I died. The woman you know as Miss Desmond, the governess, is Marie, your first wife. Come to me, for I want you—I need you. I love you—I love you!"

But the letter was never sent. Realizing the utter futility of it all, Marie tore it into bits and wept.

She forced that pleading, luring voice within her to be silent. She prayed for strength to withstand the temptation and to be content with conditions as they existed.

Yes, Marie wept countless tears in the solitude of her room. But there was always one bright spot in her great sorrow.

She would join the children who had gone out to play accompanied by the faithful Annie. When she saw their happy, welcoming smiles, she felt amply compen-

sated for her pains.

One sunny afternoon when the children were again romping on the sand under Annie's watchful eyes, Marie left them alone to write a letter.

On her way to the hotel she noticed an elderly gentleman sitting on a bench shaded by a hugh palm tree.

She gave him a casual glance as she was about to pass. Something about him reminded her of an old friend.

Apparently he paid no attention to her as she came to a dead stop and stared at him. His broad-brimmed straw hat lay beside him on the bench, and his attitude bespoke weariness.

Upon closer investigation, Marie discovered that the man's eyes were closed in peaceful slumber.

But she discovered something else that made her heart skip a beat. This man was none other than Mr. Shields, an intimate old friend and family lawyer.

The last time they met was when she went to his office after her tragic disagreement with Phil. She had gone to retain him to fight her case in the divorce court.

For a moment she hesitated. What if he awoke and recognized her in spite of her changed features?

And awaken he did. He rubbed his eyes sleepily, then stared at the face above his. Suddenly he smiled.

"This southern atmosphere makes one doze off," he said apologetically.

"It does," she agreed without moving. "Miami is a wonderful place to recuperate, isn't it?"

The man looked startled. That voice!

During the moment of silence Marie's mind worked with feverish haste. Why not confide in him.

She never had a more loyal friend than he. Mr. Shields and her father had been bosom chums, and had he not often told her to come to him if she ever was in

trouble?

There never was a time in all her life when she needed a sympathetic friend as she did now.

"I suppose you don't know who I am, Mr. Shields," she said sweetly.

He shook his head.

"Your voice sounds very familiar," he answered, looking her over carefully. "And your figure reminds me of one I knew in the past. But your face I have never seen before."

Marie was still smiling.

"Modern surgery has done many things," she said. "It can change the contour of a face and make it unrecognizable."

"Yes, I know," the old lawyer replied, puzzled. "But it can not change eyes."

"No, my eyes are the same, and you have looked into them before, Mr. Shields. I came to you one time when I was in deep trouble. You promised to help me. I wanted possession of my two children, and——" She paused.

"What?" Mr. Shields was on his feet. "My God, who are you?"

"I am Marie Gordon."

"Philip Gordon's first wife?"

"Yes."

The man's surprise amounted to stupefaction. He reached for his hat and began fanning himself. He continued staring at the beautiful woman, his eyes bulging.

"Don't you believe me?" asked Marie at length.

Still he continued staring. When he found his voice finally, he extended his hand with an exclamation of joy which instantly warmed Marie's heart.

"Mrs. Gordon—Marie!" he cried. "Yes, it's you.

Good lord, will wonders never cease? I thought they buried you at Gary, Indiana, after the explosion of the steel mills. And now you turn up here alive, and with a face like an angel."

She laughed at the expression he used.

"You are still the same old flatterer, Mr. Shields," she told him as she seated herself on the bench and motioned to him to do likewise. "Of course you want to know how it all happened, don't you?"

"Do I?" He quickly dropped beside her. "More than that, my dear young woman. And when you get through, I'll spring a little surprise on you."

Chapter 94

GOOD NEWS

MARIE plunged into her story at once. She related various incidents in connection with her employment in the home of the Gary Steel King. Something like horror came into her face as she described the frightful explosion while in the laboratory with the owner of the plant.

And then she explained why she had adopted the name of "Marie Desmond" after her face had been rebuilt at the hospital.

When she told him how she had taken the position of governess to her own children in Philip Gordon's home, Mr. Shields' amazement knew no bounds.

He stared at her blankly as she explained the existing conditions in the house of the man she loved so dearly.

Her voice softened when she spoke of Phil's remorse after he learned how deeply he had wronged her. And she admitted frankly that she loved him more than she ever did.

"I can't understand how you got away with it," Mr. Shields exclaimed as she finished. "Phil must be blind not to have recognized you."

"But he didn't," she replied. "I took precious good care that he did not. It was a terrible struggle, I admit. There were moments when I felt I must throw myself into his arms.

"Believe me, it was not easy for me to listen to him speaking of his restored faith and love for me—his once condemned wife, without breaking down."

"Why didn't you reveal yourself?" the old lawyer demanded. "You had a perfect right to."

Marie shook her head sadly.

"Yes, I had a perfect right to that very thing, my dear friend. But there were reasons why I had to restrain myself. His second wife is a beautiful woman, and I believe that way down in his soul he loves her in spite of all the heartaches she has caused him.

"I could not force him into a position where he had to choose between us. I could not cause poor Phil any more misery, for he had been already made to suffer terribly through me."

Mr. Shields nodded repeatedly.

"Perhaps you did the best thing after all," he murmured, "although I am very sorry for you. Of course, I shall not say anything about this matter. You would not want me to, would you?"

"No—no!" she gasped, paling a trifle. "I shall remain Marie Desmond until fate or providence gives me the right to resume the one I prized so highly and lost."

He placed a hand on her shoulder.

"We are all victims of the thing called fate," he said. "Ah, what a blessing it is that your old dad did not live to see this state of affairs. He was the best and truest friend any man ever had. But enough of that now, Marie. I wonder if you could guess why I am so glad to find you alive."

She gave him a swift glance. There was something in his merry eyes that set her to thinking.

"I was never very good at guessing things, Mr. Shields," she confessed. "I presume, however, that you are glad to see me because I am my father's daughter and that you——"

"Yes," he interrupted. "But guess again."

She shook her head, signifying that she gave it up.

"You are to-day a very wealthy woman," he told her.

"A very wealthy woman?" Marie repeated, completely taken by surprise. "Why, you must not kid me that way, dear old friend. I can't imagine where that wealth could come from. I have no rich relatives."

"Are you quite sure of that?" from the old lawyer.

"I think I am," was the slow rejoinder.

"Did your father never tell you about a brother of an adventurous spirit who went to Australia?"

"He did not."

"But he had such a brother," Mr. Shields went on. "This uncle of yours went to Australia and accumulated an immense fortune. A few weeks ago I received a letter from him, which he wrote shortly before he died.

"In this letter he requested me to inform him, or the proper officials at Melbourne, whether his brother or any of his heirs were still alive.

"I wrote at once that your sister Julia had disappeared without leaving a trace, that you were dead as well as your father. And I reported that your two children were the only remaining heirs. But now since you turned up alive and well, you will become the sole possessor of your uncle's fortune. Now what do you think of that?"

Marie sat motionless. Her face was white. This unexpected revelation came as a stroke of fate in an ironical mood.

Why did this wealth not come to her when she was in want and had to work for strangers in order to make a decent living?

"What happiness can it bring me?" she murmured half to herself. "I would gladly give it up for the joy that is denied me."

"Sometimes happiness depends upon wealth, my

lear young woman," Mr. Shields replied. "I shall never forget the struggle I had for bread when I was a young awyer still without a practise. You must let me tell you about it, won't you?

"I had one of the most extraordinary experiences that ever came to mortal man. It not only brought me wealth, but also a most adorable wife. If you can become interested in an old man's romance, I will tell you about it."

Marie settled back comfortable and smiled.

"So you had a romance in your life?" she queried, her lips twisted humorously.

"It was a romance, a tragedy and a wonderful revelation all in one," he cried. "If you have the patience to listen, you will hear something the like of which you never heard before."

"Patience is my middle name," she told him, smiling again. "I shall be very glad to listen to your story, Mr. Shields."

The latter faced Marie, his one arm flung across the back of the bench.

"My boyhood days were not very happy because I was the son of poor parents," he began. "There was a constant struggle in our humble home to make ends meet. My father suffered with a malady which prevented him from earning an income that would keep mother and myself in comfort.

"What little insurance he carried the undertaker took. Even as a boy my mind was made up that I would never follow my father's footsteps.

"Because of his lack of education he was compelled to do hard, menial labor. There was no chance for advancement for him. It was the same thing day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year.

"Even while I attended school I carried newspapers. Then I helped in a neighborhood drugstore on every Saturday and Sunday.

"I always wanted to become a lawyer, but the only way to achieve that aim was by attending the night law school. Well, I studdied hard and finally had the pleasure of being admitted to the bar.

"I will never forget that day. I was perhaps the happiest man in the whole world. With what little money I had I furnished up an office in Chicago on West Madison street. I chose that location because there was not a lawyer within the next three blocks.

"I remember very well how important and big I felt with that sign out there proclaiming to the world that I was ready for business. The day had come at last when I was waiting for clients.

"However the thought was less impressive, when, after months had gone by, I counted the number of my clients and found I had really none I could dignify by that title.

It was still less impressive to me when I figured out my resources, and discovered that I had only a few dollars left.

"I was mentally depressed. It seemed so different from the fond hopes that had been mine. Only a few dollars left and no prospects. What proved to be the turning point came on a dark, rainy afternoon in the early part of April.

"It was just the sort of a day for gloomy reflections, and the weather was in perfect harmony with my mental state. I sat and let the knowledge of the misery of my existence create in me a feeling of the worst kind of desolation.

"The gray afternoon faded into the dusk of evening, and still the rain continued. Lights flashed up

all along the streets which were almost deserted. Finally night came and still I sat at my desk wondering what was to become of me as a lawyer.

"Suddenly I was aroused by a light step which sounded on the stairway, close to my office door.

"Who had come on such a day?

"The entrance to my office was from the outside, the stairway running up along the side of the building. I heard the door open. There was a rustle of skirts, very faint rustle, which informed me that my caller was a woman.

"I jumped from my chair, fully conscious in a moment, with the intention of turning on the light, but my caller anticipated me.

"'Don't turn on the light,' the voice said.

"It was a voice low and melodious, something I enjoyed and which informed me that the woman must be young and cultured. To me it appeared that there was a slight catch in her voice, as though she were in trouble.

"Before I could speak, she said:

"'You are Attorney Shields, are you not'

"I am,' I answered. 'Please allow me to make a light, madam.'

"'No —— no!'she said hurriedly. 'There is not any need of it, and would rather you did not.'

"I was so surprised, I did not make another move for a long moment.

"Here was a young woman alone with me in my office and she preferred the dark. A situation like that usually presages trouble of some sort.

"But surely, you won't insist upon being without a light,' I protested. 'I should like to know with whom I am talking.'

"'That is just what I don't want.' she replied swift-

ly 'I have come for you on an important mission. And first you must promise that you will accept, without question anything I may do, and that you will never reveal what you are asked to do to-night.'

"'I'll make no such promise,' I cried sharply. 'I will not become a party to a crime.'

"The woman uttered a short laugh.

" 'I have not asked you to commit a crime,' she answered.

"I told her that asking me to go blindly into something of which I was unable to judge was the kind of secrecy characteristic of crime.

" 'I am not at liberty to alter the terms of your service, Mr. Shields,' she retorted somewhat wearily. 'I would not ask you to commit a crime, but you must come with me, under the promise of secrecy, or not at all. I am authorized to offer you one thousand dollars for what you are to do.'

"Well, a thousand dollars was a fortune to me in those days. It meant the continuance of my profession. It meant placing me on my feet, and giving me a chance to wait for clients which I felt sure must come in time.

"The woman had given me the assurance that there would be no crime. My conscience was quickly eased on that point.

"Possibly my reasoning was a little loose, but I determined to take a chance. However, I was also determined that if I found myself asked to become a party to a crime or the commission of an offense, to refuse when the time came.

"I hesitated about replying, and my visitor showed signs of impatience. I could hear the stamping of her feet and the sharp intake of her breath.

"'Mr. Shields,' she exclaimed,' this is a most urg-

ent matter. While you are pondering a man may be dying. Won't you make up your mind at once?'

"'I have made up my mind,' I told her. I am now ready to go with you.'

"I took a few steps forward when she halted me. I was trying to get a view of her face and figure in the darkness. I saw that she was slender and well formed. The face was small and round, with black pools for eyes The girl was beautiful.

"She evidently did not want me to come very close, for she said:

"'Please stand where you are.'

"I obeyed. For some reason I extented my arms. She must have done the same thing, for an instant later our hands touched. A sensation of pleasure rushed over me.

"Her hand was warm and slightly moist, and its firmness again convinced me that the woman was still very young.

"It was a most romantic way of meeting. I was still a very young man, and could not fail to be impressed. I shivered as she took both of my hands and put them down, wondering what her next move would be."

Chapter 95

SHOT!

MR. SHIELDS paused in his long narrative to wipe the perspiration from his brow. Marie had become thoroughly interested and was anxious for him to continue.

Luckily she was not needed anywhere at this particular time. The children were with Annie, who always took the best of care of them. Her delicately chiseled lips curled into a grin.

This little old man was anything but a romantic hero now. But he still had a wonderful crop of gray hair, and his face was still good to look upon.

"I am waiting to hear the rest of it, Mr. Shields,' she said.

"Very well," the latter replied, and went on: "The situation in which I found myself with that young woman was not only a strange one. It was extremely dangerous. West Madison street had a bad reputation.

"There had been a number of holdups and robberies in which a woman figured prominently. I trembled because I realized the possibilities.

"Had this woman pressed a gun against my head I would have been utterly at her mercy. Fortunately, however nothing of the sort happened.

"The next moment I felt two arms go around my neck and somethings soft pressed against my eyes. I was being blindfolded.

"Then her voice, soft and close to my ears, said.

" 'You must promise me not to remove the bandage from your eyes until you have received permission.

You are to be asked to dictate a will. As soon as you arrive at your destination you will be under the command of a man.

"'I may as well tell you that if you do what he says, all will be well. But if you fail, you are likely come to harm. You—you may even get killed.'

"This was a little more than I expected. Although I was not a tall man, I always gave a good account of myself in a fistic combat. I could lick any man of my size and weight, and some above that. I was never regarded as a coward.

"But I did not feel elated at the prospect of being placed under the command of a man in my blindfolded condition and to do what I was told regardless of the fact whether it was right or wrong.

"For a moment I resolved to withdraw. And then I remembered the reward of a thousand dollars. It was a big reward. No man ever needed money more than I did then.

"And it was not only the money that lured me on. The woman's touch had inflamed me with something I had never experienced before.

"You heard what I told you,' she spoke again, and a little impatiently. 'Are you willing to comply with the conditions?'

"I told her that I was.

"She took a hold of my arm and led me down the stairs. It was still raining and the coolness of the water on my bare head was not at all unpleasant. I was placed in a closed automobile which at once drove away with great speed.

"How long we traveled I did not know, but we traversed over some mighty rough roads.

"My mysterious companion sat beside me in the rear of the car. She did not utter a sound except when

she gave some instructions to the chauffeur.

"Finally the machine was stopped.

"The moment it stopped, the woman took a hold of my hand and helped me to the ground. Not a single word did she utter. We walked along a path of gravel, which crunched under our feet.

"The rain had ceased or we would have been soaked, so far was the distance from the car to the house we entered.

"We ascended stone steps to what I thought was a concrete porch. Then we entered a hall. We went up a long flight of curving stairs, and finally landed in a brilliantly illuminated room.

"I tried to peep from under the bandage, but the woman having noticed this, pulled it down. And she did something that was rather uncalled for. She patted my cheek and told me to behave.

"The room in which we were must have been occupied by a sick person, for there was a strong odor of medicine. I heard someone move and cough slightly. It startled me.

"'So you have brought him,' said gruff voice.

"'Yes,' answered the woman.

"'Are you Mr Shields, the lawyer?' The words were addressed to me.

"I told the speaker that I was.

"'Very well,' came back in the same gruff voice. 'You understand, sir, that you are not to repeat what is done here to-night, and you are not to remove the bandage from your eyes.'

"I nodded in the direction of the voice.

"'Well, don't forget this.' There was something ominous in the way this was said.

"'I-shan't,' was my reply.

"'A man is dying here,' the gruff voice went on,

'and we have sent for you to draw up his will. It will be your duty to dictate it to me, and I will write it. I want it in strict legal form. That is right, is it not, my dear father?'

"'Yes,' whispered a feeble voice at my elbow. 'I want it done right.'

"'And it shall be as you say, father.' The tone was evidently meant to convey the idea of affection, but to me it seemed that there was little of real warmth in it. It sounded too harsh.

"I am ready,'said the man with the gruff voice, and I heard him seat himself at a table. 'The man who wantes to make this will is Henry Wilson.'

"As it happened I knew Henry Wilson by sight and by reputation. He was a wealthy commission merchant with a flourishing business on Water Street. So far as I could recall, he had no son. Naturally I wondered how this man came to call him father.

" 'I am waiting for your instructions, Mr. Wilson,' I said.

"It is brief,' the weak voice said. 'I want to leave all my property to my daughter Muriel.'

"Then I caught the sound of someone softly weeping, and I knew instantly that it was the woman who had brought me.

"The sick man was seized with a sudden coughing spell and the gruff voice cried as soon as the spasm had passed:

"'You will have to hurry, Mr Shields. He won't last much longer.'

"It was very plain that this man showed a deep interest in the making of the will, and I caught myself thinking that there was something sinister in his sitting there, urging the making of the will, without once attempting to ease the breath of the old man. It was

brutal in the extreme.

"But this was a matter of sentiment. The testator had announced that he wanted to make a will, and that was my legal business.

"I began the usual legal phrases when another paroxysm of coughing seized the sick man. I could hear the woman soothing him. When the coughing ceased, the other man broke in again:

"'Another such a spell and it will be the last!'

"It was said heartlessly, but I had no time for reflection.

"I was commanded to finish dictating the will as quickly as possible. We got through with it in a few moments. Then I heard the man at the table jump up and cry anxiously:

"'Here, father, sign it!'

"I realized that the old man was dying and knew that the witnesses would have to affix their signatures before he breathed his last. With a few words I called their attention to it.

"'Here, Muriel, sign this,' the man to whom I had dictated said.

"'She can not sign it,' I told him. 'You know that she is the beneficiary.'

"The man swore an oath, and I felt like knocking him down, for a quick gasp from the evidently horrified woman followed it.

"'What the devil are we to do?' he shouted.

"'I'll sign it,' was my response, and I lifted my hand to remove the bandage from my eyes.

"'You will do nothing of the kind!' the man exclaimed. 'Don't you dare to touch that bandage. If you do, you'll regret it ,Shields!'

"Then I told him that it would have to be done if the will was to be made legal. The next instant some-

thing cold was pressed against my forehead, and the man hissed into my ear:

"'If you remove that bandage, Shields, you are a dead man!'

"But the end of my patience had been reached. There was something rotten afoot. I wanted to see what was going on, and the heartless scoundrel who dominated the situation.

"Without a moment's hesitation I threw up one hand and pushed from my forehead the threatening weapon, while with the other I pulled off the bandage.

"There was a fierce oath. The sudden transition from darkness into light——a very brilliant light,blindeed me completely for the moment.

"I heard a terrible roar close to my ear, then a stinging pain in my left shoulder. A dizzy sensation rushed over me, and I fell.

"The return to consciousness was accompanied by the most excruciating suffering. The moment I opened my eyes, I realized that I was lying on a bed.

"As I made an attempt to rise to a sitting posture, I heard light footsteps and in a moment a face was close to mine.

"Well, I am not going to describe that face minutely. It was a woman's face, and to me, it was the most beautiful I had ever seen.

"There were deep dark blue eyes, a complexion almost ivory in whiteness, with just a touch of rose in the cheeks, and a suggestion of carmine lips that formed a perfect bow..

"The hair was deep brown and was combed back from the smooth forehead. Altogether it was a face one could not easily forget.

"I looked into it for quite a while, then I heard a sweet, gentle voice

"'You must not attempt to rise,' she said. 'You are badly injured.'

"I recognized that voice at once. It was that of my former strange visitor, and instantly I remembered the circumstances of the will, my removal of the bandage and the loud report which had driven me so suddenly in that wave of black unconsciousness.

"'I —— I have been shot,' I said.

"'Yes,' was the low answer. 'And I am so sorry, for I feel partly responsible for it. But you must not attempt to talk until you are stronger. You have been vey ill from the wound.'

"'But how ——why ——'

"'No more now, 'She said gently, but firmly. 'You will learn later.'

"'But where am I?' I asked.

"'In my home —— where you came —— that — night.' The last words trailed off until they were almost inaudible, and there were tears in her eyes.

"'I am sorry,' I said.

"'So am I,' she replied.

"'You should not worry about me,' I told her. 'I am alright.'

"Again I tried to rise. The fierce pain drove me back to the pillow with a groan.

"'Oh, you mustn't!' she gasped in deep concern. 'You will open the wound again. And if you should — if you should die ——' her hands went up to her face and her shoulders shook with emotion.

"A sudden thrill went through me, despite the horrible pain I was enduring. I caught myself wondering if this beautiful creature cared for me.

"Then I tried to dismiss the thought from my mind as absurd. Surely she was concerned for me only because I was hurt—because she, in part, was respons-

lble for my condition.

"'You are blaming yourself!' I cried. 'You must not do that. It was not your fault. Please understand, I am alright.' – – – —

"And once more I tried to rise. This time the effect was that my senses left me. I was conscious of a soft hand bathing my brow. Slowly my mind cleared. I heard the sound of half suppressed sobs.

"Then something hot fell on my cheek. I realized that a woman's tear had fallen on my face. But for the moment I could not give any outward sign of the fact that I was conscious.

"I lay there, quietly, although my senses had become alert.

"'My God, don't let him die!' I heard the woman pray. 'I could not endure it! I love him —— I love him! Oh, God, spare his life!'

"And then her lips were pressed to mine. She kissed me. I could not feign unconsciousness any longer. It was impossible.

"I opened my eyes, and looked into those lovely dark blue orbs, now slightly dimmed with tears. I smiled. She started back with a low exclamation.

"'You —— you heard?' she gasped.

"I nodded and smiled again.

"'Oh you must forget it!' she cried. 'I did not — I did not mean it. Really, I didn't. I was only afraid you were going to die.'

"'Not at all,' I answered. 'You have given me the greatest reason for wanting to live. I am going to get well now, I feel it.'

"She told me once more that she had spoken under the stress of an overwhelming emotion and that she had not meant a single word she said. She took great pains to make it emphatic. I would not believe it."

Continued in next number

Interpret Your Dreams Yourself!

Mehemet Ali's

Oriental Dream Book

The Most Complete Dream Book Published

Each Dream has its Significance

This Book Tells You What It Is

THE MYSTERIES OF THE FUTURE REVEALED

EGYPT, the ancient home of dreams and wonders, the oldest land of culture and science, the land where Joseph interpreted Pharao's dreams, is also the home or birth-place of our work, where it was written by the ancients many centuries ago. It went through the hands of many powerful rulers of Egypt, till it came into the possession of Mehemet Ali, the famous warrior, who made use of it during the time of his successful reign.

This book not only solves all dreams but contains as an appendix the celebrated

BISMARCK'S WHEEL OF FORTUNE, or: ANSWERS OF DESTINY

The old manuscript of the "Wheel of Fortune," as stated by competent authorities, is to be found in the private cabinet of Count Bismarck and some believe that the great success of Bismarck is owing to his consultation of the "Wheel of Fortune"; but of this we have no positive proofs except his successful deeds, which made him one of the greatest men of the century.

THE MISCELLANEOUS DEPARTMENT CONTAINS:

The art of Fortune Telling by Physiognomy, Phrenology, Astrology, also by Cards, Dominoes, Dice, Tea and Coffee Grounds, Fingers, etc., Talismans, Charms, Signs.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

The lucky numbers drawing prizes in Lotteries, at Prize Entertainments, etc., also a list of Dreams, with three lucky numbers attached, list of names for ladies and gentlemen and list of letters, each with three lucky numbers attached, also a list of lucky and unlucky days for males and females, making practically four books in one.

PRICE 35 CENTS

Agents can make large sales and earn good profits. Very easy to sell. Enclose amount in postage stamps and secure sample copy.

You can order Dream Book from person delivering this book or we send same well packed, by mail, postage prepaid, on receipt of price.

BARCLAY & CO. P. O. Box 847 CINCINNATI, O.

Printed in U. S. A.